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How New Strategic Arms Accord Is Expected to Be Judged by Congress and the Public

By DREW MIDDLETON
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WASHINGTON, Jan. 16 — Administration supporters of the second treaty to limit strategic arms agree with its critics in Congress and the military establishment on one point: The treaty, when signed, will provoke a bitter debate whose scope will include not only the nuclear agreement with the Soviet Union but also the entire spectrum of Russian-American relations.

Military Analysis

Government officials said last week that they were not sure when the treaty would be signed, but they appeared to be certain that the remaining differences with the Soviet Union would be resolved and that the pact would be ready to be submitted by spring.

The wariness with which members of both houses of Congress approach the treaty is explained by their intimate knowledge of the negotiations and of the probable shape of the final agreement. The Carter Administration has encouraged substantial Congressional participation in the negotiating process in contrast with the relative secrecy that surrounded the talks that led to the signing of the first agreement in 1972.

THE NEW TREATY

That agreement put ceilings on only land-based and submarine-based ballistic missiles. The new treaty, which would run to 1985, is to limit heavy bombers as well as ballistic missiles, and an accompanying three-year protocol would restrict the deployment of cruise missiles.

Under the new pact, each country would have equal numbers of arms, which would require a small reduction in the Soviet arsenal of 150 to 200 missiles and bombers. The most controversial aspect of the 1972 accord was the potential 40 percent advantage it gave Moscow in total missiles. The new agreement would put a ceiling of 2,250 on each side's strategic arsenal. There would also be identical ceilings on selected subcategories, such as the number of missiles with multiple warheads.

The new agreement would take the first step toward limiting arms modernization. Although the 1972 pact did not mention the subject, the new accord imposes limited controls on the modernization of existing arms and constrains the deployment of new systems.

Four criteria are emerging as the standards by which Congress, the public and news organizations are likely to judge the treaty. These four standards, which are the ones mentioned most often in conversations with members of Congress, senior military officers and Government officials are: equality, stability, verification of compliance and the effect of the treaty on America's allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

EQUALITY

The hard line on equality was stated by Representative Jack Kemp, Democrat of New York, in an article in Strategic Review, the quarterly of the United States Strategic Institute. The strategic arms agreement, Mr. Kemp wrote, "must permit the United States the maintenace of strategic forces which can be at least equal to those of the Soviet Union."

The interim agreement of 1972 accepted a Soviet advantage in the number of intercontinental ballistic missile launchers, although it left the United States ahead in the number of warheads and in other areas. The two treaties deal with launchers rather than missiles.

Members of Congress urged the negotiating team to propose to the Russians a reduction in their allocation of heavy I.C.B.M.'s from 326 to 150. The United States has no missiles whose warheads are classified as "heavy."

According to Mr. Kemp, this proposal was "summarily rejected by the Soviet Union, never again to be advanced by the United States delegation."

The remedy discussed in the Pentagon for this imbalance in strategic weapons is for the United States to deploy an advanced I.C.B.M. system of more than 200 mobile missiles with "heavy" payloads of between 7,000 and 8,000 pounds.

Administration sources said that such a stipulation could lead to an itensification of the nuclear arms race that the treaty is expected to slow if not stop.

STABILITY

Stability in the context of the new treaty means that as a result of the treaty neither side would be tempted by nuclear superiority to launch a first strike.

United States strategic theory is based on possessing a nuclear force capable of a retaliatory second strike. For this, the Air Force and Navy must be reasonably sure that their nuclear forces will not be crippled in a first strike.

When the treaty is debated, the stability issue may thus focus on whether the United States will retain a sufficient second-strike force.

VERIFICATION

There is general agreement that verification of compliance by the Soviet Union is likely to prove one of most awkward issues for the Administration in the treaty debate. One reason is that political changes abroad may reduce the number of American systems for verification. Another is the conviction among critics that the Russians in the last five years have been able to escape verification.

Continued political instability and anti-American feeling in Iran could lead to the dismantling of some of the strategic intelligence gathering equipment deployed there by the Central Intelligence Agency. This equipment has been used to track the flights of Russian missiles and to monitor electronic signals reporting the missiles' performance. The dismantling or the removal of this equipment, officials conceded, would complicate verification of Soviet compliance with the new treaty and would therefore add to the Administration's problems in winning approval of the treaty.

Even with all monitoring systems in operation, both sides agree that verification will be difficult. Mark M. Lowenthal, in a study prepared for the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, cited the impact of new technologies on the verification process.

"In addition to the growing demands of SALT agreements upon verification technology," he wrote, "there is the related problem of the constantly changing and improving sophistication of the weapons system technology, which in turn requires more sophisticated means for verification."

Others, like Mr. Kemp, cite "a persistent and continuing pattern of Soviet activities" designed to conceal weapons deployment and research and development.

He cites Soviet concealment of deployment of SS-16 and SS-20 missiles and the masking of silo doors and the covering of nuclear submarine construction with canvas.

NATO

The protection of allied security interests under the new treaty is a prime objective of most senior officers and many State Department officials.

Their anxiety is that treaty constraints on the range or deployment of cruise missiles will create a schism in NATO, whose most powerful members, West Germany, Britain and France, believe that the long-range cruise missile is essential to balancing the present expansion of Russian theater nuclear forces.

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